

others the energetic strength of Isaac Stern (though he's not so straightforward, nor so smoothly virtuosic, as Stern in Sam Franco's cadenza). Heightening the sense of the unexpected upon which Arnstein remarks in the notes, he supplements the text with ornamental ideas of his own. He and the orchestra give a gracefully flowing account of the second movement, marked by especially subtle expressivity in the middle section (but also by what sounds like occasional stiffness of his right-arm in passages involving string crossings). In the finale, the lyrical episodes glow in the light he shines on them. If the central section sounds less cocky than usual, that may be the result of Antonello's generally melodic approach.

The violin's slow entry in the Fifth Concerto's first movement has become so well known as no longer to offer much of a surprise; Antonello graces it with individual portamentos that might offend purists but should delight an almost equal number of other listeners. To the movement proper he brings elegance and suavity mixed in similar proportions to those in his reading of the first movement of the Third Concerto (but also with occasional roughness in across-the-string bowings). His commanding tonal warmth and musical insight even relieve Joachim's rather prolix cadenza of the tediousness some listeners unsympathetic to the idiom might otherwise experience. That assurance carries over to the slow movement as well as to the minuet-like first theme of the rondo finale; but he plays the signature exotic episodes with irresistibly jaunty piquancy; there and in the transitions between thematic materials, his deeply conceived reading lends the movement a special cogency.

The recorded sound throughout sports the somewhat anomalous combination of occasional edge with occasional dullness—all the time keeping the spotlight firmly fixed center stage on the soloist. Those who prefer personalized Mozart on modern instruments with modestly reduced orchestral forces should especially appreciate Antonello's richly characterized performances, though those in search of perfection may not be inclined to forgive the strenuousness he occasionally exhibits (these concertos have widely been recognized as holding no prisoners). Recommended most strongly to those who have enjoyed Antonello's thoughtful readings in the past. **Robert Maxham**

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## Kathryn Woodard Discusses the Piano Music of Ahmed Adnan Saygun

BY COLIN CLARKE

The music of Turkish composer Ahmed Adnan Saygun (1907–91) has never quite made it to the prominence it deserves. Pianist Kathryn Woodard's recent Albany disc of piano music by this composer is intended to set the record straight. Our interview concentrated on this new disc, and a review follows on from the article (along with reviews of two other of Woodard's discs).

First of all, I want to know where Woodward's association with the music of Saygun began. "I came to know of Saygun's music through a 1997 *New York Times* article by Stephen Kinzer who was at the time the *Times*' Istanbul correspondent," she says. "His title, 'Classical Music Apolitical? Not in Turkey,' pretty much sums up the trajectory of my research. I was a doctoral student at the time looking for a thesis topic (I was also interested in Colin McPhee's transcriptions of Balinese gamelan), and I had already traveled to Turkey in 1989 on a two-week archaeological tour of the country. I basically fell in love with the country and any excuse to go back was welcome. I was able to find Saygun's published scores and to start looking at his piano works before going to Istanbul and Ankara for a semester in 1998. I had already started studying ethnomusicology as part of my doctoral studies, so the topic fit my interests well—a composer from beyond Europe who was writing music for the piano and using various techniques associated with Turkish music.

"Prior to this research, which radically changed my focus as a pianist, I had trained at major conservatories studying the traditional classical repertoire, mainly with Gitti Pimer in Munich and Frank Weinstock in Cincinnati. I did gradually lean toward contemporary music late in my graduate studies, and percussionist Allen Otte (also at Cincinnati) was very influential in introducing me to works, composers, and trends.

"I started the piano relatively late (age nine) in Dallas, where I studied with Jo Boatright. I came to live and study in Munich after moving there with my family in 1985. My father worked as an engineer (and eventually became vice president) for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, which was still headquartered in Munich at the time. I consider his work in radio also to be very influential on my musical studies. I probably developed my earliest new-music skills by listening to the radio (as in Cage's *Imaginary Landscape No. 4*). His work in shortwave broadcasting to Eastern Europe and Central Asia also piqued my interest in these regions early on."

I point out that the music on the disc covers Saygun's creative life, from the student days in Paris (Theme and Variations, 1931) through to the *Sketches* of 1976. "Yes," Woodard says, "I wanted to give an overview of his works for solo piano. There is an even later work, the sonata from 1990. I guess that will have to go on a future album." In a sense, the record acts as an introduction to Saygun. I ask for a brief introduction to Saygun—who he was and his music? "Saygun is recognized as one of the foremost composers of Western music in Turkey. He is known as a member of the 'Turkish Five,' a group of composers who all trained to some degree in Europe and incorporated elements from Turkish music into their compositions. In addition to the piano works he wrote five operas, five symphonies, several concertos, numerous vocal and chamber works. Creating a synthesis of Western and Turkish music was a central tenet of the music reforms of the Republican era in Turkey (1920s and 1930s). But Saygun approached the practice of synthesis from very different angles depending on the nature and context of the work, and simply because of artistic inspiration. Much is made of Saygun's role in advancing Turkey's agenda of westernization, but I find his compositions belie a much more complex and nuanced understanding of compositional processes that do not necessarily fit one agenda. This is why one hears such a variety of styles in his music that one wouldn't necessarily expect from a single composer seeking a unified artistic voice." Woodard almost pre-empts my next question here. The *Sketches on Aksak Rhythms*, op. 58, includes some music of violence, yet *Inci's Book* (written for children) is beautifully simple and clean. I ask Woodard to expand on the variety of Saygun's music, both in terms of its remit and also how it changed over the course of his composing career.

"Saygun came of age at a unique time, as the Ottoman Empire was collapsing and the new Turkish Republic was being founded," she explains. "It meant that he was exposed to a lot of different styles of music that really didn't exist together in any other place in quite the same way. Western music had been introduced into the Ottoman palace in the 19th century; Western operas were being performed in the larger cities of the Empire, and some composers and musicians (such as the Armenian Dikran Cuhaciyán) were already experimenting with creating hybrid compositions blending Western and Turkish instruments. Saygun was able to draw on all of these influences and to avail himself of the newest trends in Europe, both from his student days and from continuing travel there as his career grew. While his style did change over the course of his career, I find it more interesting that the kernels for many of his approaches are already evident in his early student works. In the suite from 1931 he draws on a simple lyricism based on Turkish modal traditions (and the Gregorian chant that he was learning at the Schola Cantorum), and at the same time he is exploring complex contrapuntal writing that figures later in the études (No. 3, for example). What was not evident at this time were references to the highly virtuosic Black Sea kemence (bowed fiddle) playing that Saygun was first exposed to in 1938 when he traveled to that region. The Sketch No. 1 starts with a clear reference to that style of playing with its parallel fifths. I would also say that the virtuosity of the études not only continues the tradition of étude writing for the piano but also draws on the kind of technical display Saygun heard in Black Sea kemence playing."

I remain intrigued by the musical techniques we may find here—*makam*, for example? I also want to know more about them. "*Makam* is the modal practice of Turkish music similar in concept and practice to the use of modes in Gregorian chant. It is a complex system for composing and improvising and is also based on a different tuning system than Western temperament. *Makam* is most often associated with Turkish classical music, or more accurately the music of the Ottoman court. But similar modal constructs are found in the music of rural Turkey. Politicians of the reform period liked to think in clear-cut categories (art versus folk, etc.), but as with all music the stylistic

boundaries in reality are often blurred. I'm sure Saygun was profoundly aware of this, and so his references to *makam* are rooted in some training in Ottoman music as a youth, his research of Anatolian folk music, and his own interpretation of what works within Western temperament. This is particularly crucial for the piano works, since there is no possibility for experimenting with tuning. Saygun is often taken to task for not understanding the context for *makam* and for sullyng the tradition by attempting to write *makam* for Western instruments, but he is simply one in a long line of composers who have sought to push the boundaries, in his case from both Turkish and Western perspectives."

Personally, I find the "limping" rhythms very appealing, a characteristic of Turkish music. I ask Woodard to describe Turkish folk music in general, and Saygun's treatment of it. "The 'limping' (*aksak*) rhythms are found both in folk and art music of Turkey. They are what Bartók termed 'Bulgarian rhythms,' but actually the use of *aksak* as a term to describe these in Turkish music dates back several centuries. (I wonder if Saygun and Bartók had arguments about the rhythms' origins!) I think what sets Saygun's (and Bartók's) use of these rhythms apart from other works I've played is that he's really going for the larger pulses—not seven eighth notes of equal value, for example, but three uneven pulses: short, short, long. He also notates this in his scores with a large number 3 in the time signature rather than 7/8. He wants the player to feel the limp, rather than simply count subdivisions. This applies just as much to the later more abstract works, such as the études and *Sketches*, as it does in the actual folk dances Saygun set in *Anadolu'dan*. What makes *Anadolu'dan* so interesting is to hear how differently Saygun chooses to set three different dances. Because the original dances would only be a melody with only drumming as accompaniment, he has to decide how to create a workable accompaniment on the piano. In 'Meseli' he relies mostly on an ostinato bass and static chord pattern to substitute for the drumming, but in 'Zeybek' he provides full tertian harmony under the melody. In 'Halay' he uses a variety of techniques for each of the dance's sections, including polymodal counterpoint. It really is astounding."

Saygun's encounter with Bartók in 1936 left a lasting impression. Woodard points out in her liner notes that one can clearly hear the influence of Bartók in the pieces *From Anatolia* (1945). What does she see as similarities and differences between the two composers? "Wow, that's a tough one. Or let's say 'complex.' They are obviously from two different places, Hungary and Turkey, but the two places are similar in that they are both on the margins of Europe. In that sense the two composers shared a desire to represent musically their places of origin while still rooting their style in a modernist European musical language. The fact that this was approached through similar means can be explained by the purpose of Bartók's visit to Turkey, which was actually to demonstrate links between Hungary and Turkey. At the time the cultures were considered related through language family and roots in the Turkic world. And of course, the fact that Saygun met Bartók and heard his music created a process of influence. So Saygun was taking from Bartók, Bartók was taking from everywhere he traveled, and both composers were drawn to certain elements (irregular rhythms, modal constructs, etc.) because of cultural affiliation."

I wonder, why was there a 20-year gap between *Anadolu'dan* and the later music in Saygun's writing for the piano? "Immediately after composing *Anadolu'dan*, Saygun finished a large-scale work, the *Yunus Emre* Oratorio, which garnered him much international attention with performances in Paris and other European cities and eventually at the U.N. in 1958 under Leopold Stokowski," she says. "These successes shifted his focus to larger-scale works I believe, and the first piano concerto was in fact written during this time."

I point out that Woodard selected only five études from op. 38, even though there is plenty of playing time left on the disc. What, I wonder, was the rationale behind this? "There are actually several works that I didn't include on this disc: the Sonatina, the set of 12 preludes, the remaining études and the Sonata I mentioned. I guess I divided the works more or less in half with the idea that a second album will be forthcoming. I did only choose the Theme and Variations movement from the Suite for a reason. I don't think the other movements are as strong, and the later version of the Theme and Variations I recorded is even different from the original movement from the Suite."

I was surprised to see that ArkivMusic only lists 11 discs of Saygun's music, which seems to indicate substantial neglect. "I'm not sure why it's neglected outside of Turkey," Woodard says. "The

figure they give is only for recent recordings on major European and U.S. labels. I know of several recordings produced in Turkey (that I also own) that are not on the ArkivMusic list. So a major part of raising awareness of Saygun's music and Turkish performers would simply be to bring these Turkish discs and labels into the fold of the mainstream cataloguing system. Surely with online media nowadays, inclusivity should be possible. This doesn't even include all of the archival recordings that Turkish Radio and Television must have. A significant number of the recordings on the ArkivMusic list are from cpo's ongoing project to record the major orchestral works. So that is a positive sign that European orchestras and labels are taking serious interest in Saygun's music. But getting back to the general point that Saygun's music has been neglected: I think Saygun and his music have suffered from the role he has been assigned as a proponent of Turkish nationalism. Even though he is upheld as an important cultural figure in Turkey as a composer of Western music, his music needs more attention outside of Turkey if he is to be recognized as an important 20th-century composer."

I know Woodard has done much research into Saygun, and that that led to her being the consultant for Turkish music for Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road project; what exactly was her involvement there? "I was charged with identifying Turkish composers to commission as part of the Silk Road's commissioning project," she says. "That is how I came to know Hasan Uçarsu, whose music I recorded on another CD (*Journeys*), and he was a student of Saygun. My role as consultant also involved a presentation of my findings to a commissioning panel, and that is how I came to discuss Saygun's music with Yo-Yo Ma. Afterwards I sent him a few of the cello scores, and he has since performed a movement of the Suite for Solo Cello on numerous occasions, both on Silk Road Ensemble concerts and as an encore following concerto performances."

How would Woodard sum up her own reactions to Saygun's music? "Initially I found his music intriguing but also frustrating. I was puzzled by the wide variety of styles present in his music, as you mention. It took me several years to arrive at the explanation I gave above, and actually the cultural milieu of turn-of-the-century Turkey that led to Saygun's development as a composer has yet to be fully explored and assessed. It's a period and region rife with contentions, to say the least. But now I find it odd that it was difficult to switch styles so quickly from piece to piece or even with a piece. We as performers do that all the time in the context of a recital program, but somehow we still expect a unified style from a single composer as if he/she doesn't have a true voice otherwise.

"I have found performing Saygun's music for audiences to be very rewarding, as it always gives me new perspectives on how listeners are hearing the music and contextualizing it within the broader scope of piano music. I particularly enjoy playing the études and *Sketches*." There are Saygun piano concertos (mentioned briefly earlier in this article), but Woodward has no immediate plans to record these. "I would love to start delving into the piano concertos, which I know from Gülsin Onay's recordings," she says, "but I have only cursorily perused them at this point. I think collaborating with the right conductor and orchestra to find new interpretations would be exciting."

Looking at Woodard's Web site, she seems to be remarkably well traveled. And of course the central thesis of her musical life seems to be cross-cultural music exchanges. The two discs, *Silhouettes* and *Journeys*, exemplify this. The most recent disc, *Journeys*, mixes Japanese, Georgian (Eka Chabashvili, another composer who crosses boundaries between European and non-European traditions), Croatian, Turkish (Hasan Uçarsu, himself a pupil of Saygun), and Mongolian (Sansargereltek Sangidorj) music, continuing the concept of fertile cross-border correspondence. Perhaps the most imaginative score here, for me, is the Matthusen. *Silhouettes*, too, mixes Anatolian, Japanese, Chinese, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan music. I wonder if Woodward can, for example, give examples of concert programs to further exemplify what she does?

"I run a series at Texas A&M University called Sonic Crossroads, presenting themed concerts that explore a certain region or composer," she says. "One of the first was titled *Caucasian Sketches*, with a chamber arrangement of Ippolitov-Ivanov's piece by that name that included baglama, a Turkish long-necked lute. It also included works by Saygun, Khachaturian, Franghiz Ali-Zadeh, and a new piece by Eka Chabashvili. Other concerts have explored new chamber music from Japan, and the music of Croatian composer Ivan Bozicevic. A recent collaboration with the Museum of Fine Arts Houston paired images from the museum's collection with works by Béla Bartók, George

Antheil, Morton Feldman, György Kurtág, and Bruce Wolosoff.”

And future recordings? “Besides the remaining works by Saygun, I have a lot of piano music by other Turkish composers that deserves to be recorded, so a compilation CD would be in order. I’ve also had in mind to record the chamber music of Saygun; there are works for violin and piano and cello and piano.” What about collaborations with living composers? And, indeed, Woodard’s own creative output (given that *Journeys* includes her own *Lyric Suite*)?

“I don’t have any further collaborations planned currently, but I am working on a set of chamber pieces of my own for oboe, clarinet, cello, and piano. One of these was commissioned by a contemporary-music group in Split, Croatia, so the cross-cultural exchange is indeed happening!”

**SAYGUN Suite**, op. 2: Theme and Variations (revised version). **Sketches on Aksak Rhythms**, op. 58. **From Anatolia**, op. 25. **Inci’s Book**, op. 10. **Études on Aksak Rhythms**, op. 38: Nos. 3, 4, 5, 7, 10  
• Kathryn Woodard (pn) • ALBANY TROY1168 (56:14)

This is a remarkable disc. Above and beyond Kathryn Woodard’s magnetic musicality lies her staunch and unwavering advocacy of Saygun’s music, music that is at once appealing and approachable yet at the same time mysterious and complex. The interview reproduced above introduces many of the concepts that lie behind this music.

The Theme and Variations, part of the op. 2 Suite, was written in 1931 while Saygun was still a student at the Schola Cantorum in Paris, where he was a pupil of Vincent d’Indy. The Suite was actually Saygun’s first work for solo piano. Woodard presents the composer’s own reworked version (no exact date is available). The theme actually recurs in the manner of a ritornello. Above all it is the strength of conviction that the composer exhibits that is so impressive here. Forty-five years later, Saygun wrote the *10 Sketches on Aksak Rhythms*, op. 58. Some of these (No. 2, for example) sound almost improvised. Others, like the first (mentioned in the interview with reference to its invocation of the Black Sea kemence, a small bowed fiddle), are more clearly rhythmic. The musical language itself frequently calls on octatonic and pentatonic scales. Woodard seems to be able to enter easily and immediately into the character of each individual movement. Perhaps the buzzing No. 4 is the most overtly exciting movement; she is also completely unapologetic of the dissonances of No. 5, while the dark, low-register oscillations of No. 7 emerge as a sort of Turkish tribute to late Liszt. A sense of play informs the final sketch.

The three pieces that constitute *From Anatolia (Anadolu’dan)* of 1945 are “Meşeli,” “Zeybek,” and “Halay.” Each originates from a different region. The simplicity of “Zeybek” is most inviting. *Inci’s Book* (1934) is pure delight. It dates from the same year as the premiere of two of Saygun’s operas (what are the chances of hearing a Saygun opera, I wonder?). In using simple textures, it acts as a sort of distillation of Saygun’s thought. The results can be surprising. The penultimate movement, a Lullaby, is almost heartbreaking in its effect. With textures stripped down to an absolute minimum, it is almost unbearably poignant. The final movement, “Dream,” emerges as an expressive prolongation of the lullaby.

There is a 30-year gap between *Inci’s Book* and the *Études*, op. 38 (1964). In the latter, Saygun writes in his most astringent manner. According to Woodard’s booklet notes, “these pieces have become a rite of passage for serious piano students in Turkey.” The second étude we hear, No. 4, is an intriguing mix of Debussian textures with quasi-improvised melody. The slowly evolving, exploratory nature of No. 7, with its use of wide registral spaces, makes for huge contrast to the final étude we hear (No. 10), a splendid, virtuoso way to close the disc.

The Naxos competition comes in the form of Zeynep Üçbaşaran (reviewed by myself in *Fanfare* 32:2). The two discs offer complementary programs (although there is some overlap). While I admire Üçbaşaran’s sense of rhythm and her enthusiasm, it is Woodard that captures the laurels as she seems most attuned to Saygun’s modes of expression. Albany’s recording, also, offers a truer piano sound than that accorded by Naxos. **Colin Clarke**

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tural disorientation, yet probably no worse than when Turkish listeners heard Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio* and wondered what on earth that had to do with *their* music. Ahmed Adnan Saygun, acknowledged dean of Turkish composers and long viewed in that country as a bridge between East and West, based much of his aesthetic on those Western composers who taught him (d'Indy) and those whose music he admired (Bartók). Emotionally, I find the music a little remote for my aesthetic, but rhythmically and harmonically, it's wonderful.

Since this music is a little strange it's likewise hard to describe in words. It is not overly complex in terms of structure—that much will be accessible to Western ears—as it is in terms of harmony and rhythm, which is quite exotic to these ears. Of course, the same could be said 50 years ago of the music of Bartók himself, which took quite a while to catch on. These two composers shared a passion for blending indigenous folk themes and rhythms into classical structures, a trait that American composers have only really dabbled in with the exception of one whose music is generally marginalized by classical buffs, Charles Mingus. Turkish music being virtually unknown in the West, however, somewhat inhibits our appreciation of Saygun's accomplishment, brilliant though it is.

Perhaps the best word I can use to describe these pieces is eclectic, though that is almost a cop-out. Kathryn Woodard wrote the liner notes herself, and she does a better job of describing the rhythmic complexities than I, yet even she has a difficult time putting this music into words. "Are the simple ornamental lines of 'Masal' [in *Inci's Book*] to be heard as Phrygian mode or Kürdi makam, or some combined reference to ancient Phrygia in central Anatolia?" she asks, leaving the question unanswered. As for the pieces themselves, *Inci's Book*, a suite for children, is not only the most accessible but also perhaps the best guide to his approach for a neophyte listener, while *From Anatolia*, influenced by Bartók, is one suite Western ears will find congenial to their experience. I personally found the *10 Sketches on Aksak Rhythms* ("aksak," Turkish for "limping," generally refers to the irregular meters of both Anatolian folk music and Ottoman art music) interesting and inviting, while the études seemed to me the most remote.

Woodard's pianism is clear and lucid. She plays deep in the keys to produce a warm tone, but with little or no pedal. In some pieces I feel a lack of sparkle, yet her goal seems to me to be to present the structure of Saygun's music clearly, and that she accomplishes beautifully. Having not heard the alternate recordings of *From Anatolia* or *Inci's Book* by pianist Zeynep Üçbaşaran (Naxos 8.570746), or *10 Sketches* by either Üçbaşaran or Joel Fan (on Reference Recordings 106), I can't say which would be preferable, but this is certainly a worthy introduction to the music of a neglected master. **Lynn René Bayley**

**SILHOUETTES** • Kathryn Woodard (pn) • SONIC CROSSROADS SC01 (62:15)

**SUN** *Pastoral Colors*. **YAMADA** *7 Poems (For Him and Her)*. **XIAO-SONG** *Ji No. 3: Silent Mountain*. **TEMOR** *Spiritual Gathering*. **YANOV-YANOVSKY** *Silhouettes*

*Silhouettes* begins its journey in Anatolia with Muammer Sun's *Pastoral Colors*. Sun was born in 1934 and wrote this six-movement piece in 1953–54. Sun was a pupil of Saygun, and the lineage is very evident. Kathryn Woodard's rapport with this music is clear. The recording quality is higher than that of her Albany Saygun disc, more rounded and with more presence. On to Japan, and music by Kosaku Yamada (1886–1965). The liner notes (presumably by Woodard herself) refer to Yamada's *Seven Poems* as "character pieces reminiscent of the early cycles by Robert Schumann." Certainly there is a palpable sense of intimacy here. Woodard projects a sense of joy in the second piece. Yamada was trained in Berlin, so his music again straddles different cultural boundaries. The work's subtitle, "For Him and Her," refers to the masculine and feminine nature of the themes (a reference to the Florestan and Eusebius parts of Schumann's character, perhaps?). The overt nostalgia of the penultimate movement is almost saccharine; it is left to the final number to add dissonant spice.

Next, a transcription: Qu Xiao-song (b. 1952) has arranged a work for the zhong (Chinese zither) for piano. The subtitle refers to the work's expansive nature, a sort of composed stasis that is, it turns out, very beautiful indeed. Woodard provides her own transcription of Tajik vocalist Umar Temor's *Spiritual Gathering*. The influence of Cage is evident in Woodard's transcription via prepared piano techniques. Finally, a sequence of seven fascinating *Silhouettes* by Tashkent-born (in 1963) Dmitri

Yanov-Yanovsky that pay homage to both American and Russian composers: Stravinsky; Gershwin/Ravel; Ives; Cage; Shostakovich; Debussy; Schnittke. Yanov-Yanovsky clearly has a deft compositional hand, and the wit of the Gershwin/Ravel movement is relished by Woodard. The Cage is 33 seconds long (it is silence, shorn of the other four minutes—witty, perhaps, except it makes a nonsense of the mathematical reasoning behind 4:33). Lumbering Shostakovich sits next to perfumed Debussy, and Schnittke winds up the set, enigmatically. Entertaining pastiche. **Colin Clarke**

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With this CD, obviously the very first for a new label called Sonic Crossroads, Kathryn Woodard has created a new genre in classical music: a mood album with substance. I'm not sure if she chose the format before choosing the program, but whatever way she did it, it works. Not one of these composers was familiar to me, so obviously none of these works were, either.

Muammer Sun (b. 1932 or 1934; I've seen both dates) is a Turkish composer who was a pupil of Adnan Saygun. I personally find this suite a little more accessible than some of Saygun's music, being more lyrical to my ears. Conversely, the earlier Japanese composer Kosaku Yamada (1886–1965) wrote in a style as much if not more Western than Japanese, at least in *Seven Poems*. Track 10 sounds positively Schumann-like, and I wondered if those Yuppies who want relaxing classical dinner music would find it ambient or relaxing enough. Qu's (b. 1952) *Ji No. 3: Silent Mountain* is, by contrast, the most ambient piece on the CD, consisting almost entirely of suspended notes and chords with little or no forward momentum. Woodard herself made the transcription of *Spiritual Gathering* from a song performed at the 2002 Silk Road Festival by Umar Temor, and it is a tour de force in both 4/4 and 7/8 rhythm utilizing some "prepared piano" techniques. Uzbek composer Dmitri Yanov-Yanovsky (b. 1963) contributes a charming and eclectic suite dedicated to various 20th-century composers: Stravinsky, Gershwin and Ravel (a combined piece), Ives, Cage, Shostakovich, Debussy, and Schnittke (I could have lived without Cage or Schnittke, as I believe the first was just a jokester and the second only good at pastiche). Oddly enough, to my ears, the second piece sounds like Ives/Ravel, while the third sounds more like Gershwin to me (certainly, those are Gershwin rhythms and not Ivesian ones; perhaps Yanov-Yanovsky has his American composers confused). Happily, his homage to Cage is 33 seconds of silence, so you can skip that track entirely, unless you just want a break or to be confused for 33 seconds. (I want to play this piece at a piano competition ... I'd win first prize! And just to be a smart-aleck, I'd have the sheet music on my piano, staring at it intensely!) The Shostakovich pastiche is utterly delightful, focusing on his whimsical humor rather than his dour moods. Again, however, I wonder if some of this music isn't too busy for your "relax with Ravel, take Xanax with Xenakis" crowd. The Debussy is appropriately prelude-ish, the Schnittke appropriately awful. Well, at least he got Schnittke's style right!

Throughout the recital, Woodard plays with excellent structural clarity, which helps bring across the varying styles of these composers. If you're looking for such an album, and have an interest in world composers for piano, this is certainly a good choice. **Lynn René Bayley**

**JOURNEYS** • Kathryn Woodard (pn) • SONIC CROSSROADS SC02 (62:26)

**FUJIE** *Pas de deux II*. **CHABASHVILI** *Panorama*. **WOODARD** *Lyric Suite*. **BOŽIČEVIĆ** *Sotto voce*. **MATTHUSEN** *Run-on Sentence of the Pavement*. **UÇARSU** *Reminiscences of a Summer Journey I: Aperlai (Sunken City); Patara (A City Singular in Richness)*. **SANGIDORJ** *Endless Stairways*

Japanese composer Keiko Fujiie (b. 1963) presents an angular, jangly *moto perpetuo* that subsides into pointillist ruminations before regaining its disturbed forward motion for her *Pas de deux II*. In stark contrast lies Georgian composer Eka Chabashvili's *Panorama* of 1996. Here time seems to stand still (or at least be stretched) in the manner of Feldman. In Kathryn Woodard's own *Lyric Suite* for prepared piano (the title refers to Robert Motherwell's painting of the same name), Orientalist influences abound. The second movement (of six) seems to be music for an imagined Chinese ballet, while gamelan is perhaps most obvious in the final two movements.

At 17:11, Ivan Božičević's *Sotto voce* (1994–2008) is the most extended work on this disc. There are six movements, and the work is based on a haiku by Bashō. The oscillating, carillon-like

sonorities of the second movement are most appealing, as are the funeral-like chords of the finale. My own preferred work on this album, though, is American composer Paula Matthusen's *Run-on Sentence of the Pavement*. Scored for piano, ping-pong balls, and electronics, this shows evidence of a composer of huge imagination and talent (Matthusen was born in 1978). A hypnotic journey, this is the clear highlight of the disc.

Woodard plays two movements from Istanbul-born Hasan Uçarsu's *Reminiscences of a Summer Journey I* (the work's subtitle is "A Tale of Four Ancient Cities"). First, muted, plucked snippets vie with unaltered piano sonorities in "Aperlai." Grandeur in the form of huge gestures begins "Patara" before a deep loneliness takes over. Finally, Mongolian composer Sansargereltek Sangidorj's *Endless Stairways* (1999): Another *moto perpetuo*, this is a most appealing way to end the disc.

Although *Silhouettes* includes notes on the composers presented and their music, it is worthwhile pointing out that for *Journeys* one has to go to Woodard's own Web site ([kathrynwoodard.com](http://kathrynwoodard.com)) for the liner notes (links to featured composers' sites can also be found there). **Colin Clarke**

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With this, Kathryn Woodard's second CD for the fledgling Sonic Crossroads label and the third I've reviewed in this issue, I've finally gotten a handle on her style. Although a master of keyboard manipulation, Woodard is not a flashy virtuoso, and so substitutes clarity of structure, keyboard control, and sustained moods for "bound" phrases at great speed. Of course, most of the works I've heard her play are eccentric pieces outside the standard repertoire, but even in those closely related to 19th-century Western piano music her playing concentrates on finely etched imaging and suspension of forward momentum. Whether consciously or not, then, she has created a highly personal style in a world cluttered with cookie-cutter pianists. I believe I can now spot a Kathryn Woodard performance just as easily as I can (usually) detect one by Alfred Cortot, Artur Schnabel, Dinu Lipatti, or Glenn Gould, and that is a good thing.

But those who acquired her first Sonic Crossroads CD, *Silhouettes*, should be warned that this second one, titled *Journeys*, is by no means as much of an "easy listening" experience. Most of the music here is denser, more energetic, and/or more out of center than that on her first. Here Woodard explores, for the most part, music of stronger rhythms, denser harmonies, and more challenging structures. Indeed, it is not until the midpoint of the disc, Ivan Božičević's *Sotto voce*, that one encounters a work that can be called "relaxing" in any way.

Keiko Fujiie's *Pas de deux II*, in fact, is described by the composer as "a dance of perpetual motion," and indeed it is. The music reflects for her "the chain of life" through movements of the neck, shoulders, arms, hips, and feet. Apparently, the pianist who tackles this work should expect to study gymnastics! Likewise, Eka Chabashvili's *Panorama* combines Western and Eastern (Georgian) musical gestures, including strummed and beaten piano strings, which create both a strange tension and darker mood.

This trend is not dispelled by Woodard's own *Lyric Suite*. Here, she plays music that she improvised into being at a piano prepared partly to the specifications of John Cage and partly from her own experience with the Balinese gamelan *gong kebyar*. The mood of her own piece is decidedly lighter than Chabashvili's but no less dense. The melodic quality of some of it is contrasted with layered lines and punctuated gong strokes. Woodard describes the suite as "a nod to Robert Motherwell's painting cycle of the same name, which is based on similar improvisational impulses inspired by Far Eastern aesthetics and notions of creativity."

As mentioned earlier, Božičević's *Sotto voce* is a simple, elegant piece based on a haiku by Bashō: *Kane Kiete* (The Bell Fades Away), *Hana No Kawa Tsuku* (The Blossom's Fragrance Ringing), *Yuube Kana* (Early Evening). But with Paula Matthusen's *Run-on Sentence of the Pavement* we're really plunged into unfamiliar territory. Here we have a work written for—I kid you not—piano, ping-pong balls, and electronics. Indeed, my thought was, "Toto, I don't think we're in Kansas anymore!" Matthusen melds sampled and processed sounds from recording sessions with Woodard together with structured improvisations that call on the performer to interact with the electronics created from those sessions. Before you turn your nose up at it, give it a listen. It works!



Hasan Uçarsu, yet another composer from one of Woodard's favorite countries, Turkey (along with Muammer Sun, featured on *Silhouettes*, and of course Saygun), creates a piece with a busy first movement and a calm, still second, but the CD ends on an upbeat note with Sansargereltek Sangidorj's *Endless Stairways*. Here's another perpetual-motion piece, with a Frederic Rzewski kind of offbeat, modal harmonic base fused with almost jazz-like syncopation. And here, Woodard is really unbuttoned, flying through the piece with unrestrained joy, like a kid discovering that a hubcap can be made to spin like a top.

My lone complaint about this CD is that it has no notes on the music. For that, one must go to her Web site, [kathrynwoodard.com](http://kathrynwoodard.com). The notes are copious, and fascinating, but alas, there's no room in the little fold-over album to put them! Considering that Woodard loves to collect and perform eclectic works from around the world, and also that on this CD she presents us with the music of four women, I'd love to hear her play, and record, some of the marvelous world piano music of Nancy Van de Vate. There's a tip for you, Kathryn, if you want to expand your already broad repertoire! **Lynn René Bayley**

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## A Conversation with George Theophilus Walker, a Pulitzer Prize Winner

BY JAMES A. ALTENA

George Theophilus Walker has long been recognized as one of the most important American composers of the 20th century. He is also the dean of American black composers, being the first to win the Pulitzer Prize in music, for his work *Lilacs* in 1996. In December 2009 his most recent composition, the Violin Concerto, received its world premiere with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Walker's son Gregory as the soloist. Albany Records has just released a recording of the work with the same soloist, accompanied by the Sinfonia Varsovia under Ian Hobson. In 2009, Scarecrow Press published Walker's autobiography, *George Walker: Reminiscences of an American Composer and Pianist*. This past March, I conducted the following interview with Walker in his home in Montclair, New Jersey.

*Q: You note in your recently published autobiography that you composed your new Violin Concerto for your older son. Would you please discuss in greater detail the impetus for composing the piece at this time? How much involvement did Gregory have with the creative process?*

*A:* After composing the work now called *Poème*, which was commissioned as a violin concerto for the Phiharmonia Virtuosi, a chamber ensemble founded by Richard Kapp, I decided that I wanted to write another violin concerto—this time for full orchestra. I wanted Gregory to give the premiere of it. He was not aware that I was writing the work until the concerto was finished. His input was limited to reminding me that a few figurations could be made easier for the soloist. He also remarked that a phrase in 32nd notes was too fast for the tempo. Although it was possible to play the notes, they wouldn't sound clean. Since this was not what I had intended, I added a slower metronomic marking for those measures.

*Q: How satisfied were you with the premiere performance in Philadelphia?*

*A:* The Philadelphia Orchestra performance given by my son was remarkable. His playing was completely controlled and brilliantly projected. It conveyed all the expressiveness that can be found in the score. Neeme Järvi, the conductor, was not sufficiently prepared initially for the difficulties in the score, but by the third performance he was more confident in his conducting. A singular aspect of the performance that was disappointing was the poor acoustics of Verizon Hall.

I feel that it was important for everyone to know how gifted my son is. Playing this challenging concerto from memory is a major achievement; Järvi called him "a genius" for being able to do so. There are also his exceptional performances of my *Poème* and my two violin sonatas on Albany Records that nobody has even commented on. His ability to comprehend and master very difficult works has not been acknowledged by the press. These are scores that have been performed by many violinists who can't match the intensity and the vibrancy that he brings to them.